Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi  
DEPARTMENT OF ART  
Spring 2014  

ARTS 4390.002 Topics in Art  
Nature and Technology in Modern Art

Course description:
The course will cover key movements from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries in the context of social and political developments related to changing perceptions of nature and the rise of technology. Topics will range from the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the arts in the late nineteenth century, to the inter-war period in Europe, up to and including the commodity culture of America in the 1950s, followed by a consideration of the widening scope of material used in the post-war era and the changing relationship between art and spectator with respect to Land Art and Arte Povera.

Lecture times: Monday/Wednesday, 3:30pm-4:45pm  
Location: ECDC 219B

Instructor: Professor Dr. Laura Petican  
Office: CA Room 206A  
Office hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 10:00-11:00am  
Telephone: 361-825-5752  
E-mail: laura.petican@tamucc.edu

Required texts:


Recommended texts:


Evaluation:

Reading Response: 10%  
Research Paper Proposal: 20%  
Group Research Presentation: 30%  
Research Paper: 30%  
Participation: 10%
Reading Response: 10%
Due: January 29
Each student will write a 500-word response to an assigned reading. The purpose of this exercise is to engage students at the outset of the course with dominant themes and conceptual motifs that will be explored at length in subsequent class discussions. The response must contain a summary of the main argument of the reading, a discussion of one key idea outlined in the text, and must pose 1-2 questions related to the text that will be discussed in class. Your response to the text may be articulated, for example, in terms of agreement or disagreement with the author’s perspective, or it may identify limitations or particular strengths within the argument, and should be supported with examples.

Research Paper Proposal: 20%
Due: February 24
Students will submit a 500-word outline of their research proposal in preparation for the research paper. The proposal must include a working thesis that clearly states the topic and objective of the paper, a statement of intent that outlines a critical rationale for choosing your topic, and must include a methodological plan for completing the larger paper. A List of Figures and accompanying images as well as a preliminary, annotated bibliography of 8-10 sources must accompany the proposal. All documents must observe proper Chicago Style formatting guidelines.

Group Research Presentation: 30%
Each group will lead a class discussion on a predetermined topic related to the larger themes of the course. The group presentations will address key movements, artists, and artworks in connection with the assigned reading and will relate these topics to the broader scope of contemporary socio-cultural developments. All members of the group must participate equally in the preparation and delivery of the presentation, as well as in the following class discussion. Each group member must speak for approximately 15 minutes. The group must prepare 3-4 questions that will generate class discussion following the presentation and which focus on issues raised by artworks discussed in connection with the corresponding reading. This discussion should last approximately 10 minutes. As a means of orientation, the presenting group will distribute a one-page handout to each class member that outlines the main themes and concepts addressed. Presentations will be graded according to the group’s general management of the presentation in terms of timing and distribution of work, the group’s ability to communicate their topic clearly and concisely to the class, its capacity to draw connections between artworks and the assigned reading, the clarity and relevance of the handout, and the quality of questions formulated and discussion generated.

Research Paper: 30%
Due: May 5
The final research paper will articulate the thesis presented in your Research Paper Proposal according to the critical rationale and methodology outlined. Research papers must be between 3000-3500 words (approximately 10-12 pages) in length and accompanied by a List of Figures, images of artworks discussed, and a complete bibliography of all works cited. All documents must follow MLA guidelines. Research papers will be graded according to the clarity of your argument, your ability to synthesize both visual and literary sources, the level of engagement with critical socio-cultural issues related to the course, and the strength of your thesis with respect to examples and evidence provided.
Participation: 10%
Students are required to attend class each week with assigned readings completed and prepared to engage in discussion related to lecture topics. The participation mark is formulated according to the extent and quality of your engagement in class discussions, including those following group presentations. Please be aware that missing more than 15% of classes may result in the student being barred from submitting the final paper.

Weekly schedule:

Week 1 – January 22 – Introduction: Negotiating a Changing Aesthetic Vision

Week 2 – January 27, 29 – Romanticism to Realism in France and Britain

Reading Response due (January 29): 10%

Week 3 – February 3, 5 - Impressionism
Manet and Baudelaire: Urban Existence and the Painters of Modern Life

Week 4 – February 10, 12 – Post-Impressionism and the Abstraction of Nature
Painting Out-of-Doors and the Salon de Paris

Week 5 – February 17, 19 – Post-Impressionism and the Abstraction of Nature, continued
Part I: The Art Forms of Nature: Ernst Haeckel and Karl Blossfeldt
Part II: Primitivism and Symbolism – Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gaugin and Henri Rousseau

Week 6 – February 24, 26 – Post-Impressionism and Art Nouveau
Part I: Art Nouveau Design and the Synthesis of Nature and Technology
Part II: The Nabis, Seurat and Toulouse-Lautrec
Research Paper Proposal due (February 24): 20%

Week 7 – March 3, 5 – Fauvism and Expressionism
Part I: German Expressionism: Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter

Part II: Wild Beasts: Matisse and the Fauves

Spring Break: March 10-14 – no class

Week 8 – March 17, 19 – Cubism and Futurism
Part I: Italian Futurism and the Speed of Modernity
Arnason and Mansfield. “‘Running on Shrapnel’: Futurism in Italy.” 211-19.

Part II: Picasso’s Cubist Visions and the Rise of Modernism

Week 9 – March 24, 26 – De Stijl and Constructivism
Russian Constructivism and the Socialist Cause
De Stijl and International Neoplasticism: Art and Architecture

Week 10 – March 31, April 2 – Dada, Surrealism, and the Metaphysical School
Part I: Altered Reality: The Italian Metaphysical Painters

Part II: Dada and Surrealism – The Rejection of Reality
Arnason and Mansfield. Chapter 11, “Picturing the Wasteland: Western Europe During World War I.” 235-63.
Week 11 – April 7, 9 – Abstraction and Neo-Realism in the US and Europe
European Abstraction and Neo-Realism

Week 12 – April 14, 16 – American Abstract Expressionism

Week 13 – April 21, 23 – Informale and Pop
Part I: *Informale* and the *Miracolo Italiano*

Part II: American Pop Art and the Commodification of Everyday Life

Week 14 – April 28, 30 – New Spectator Experience Between Nature and Technology
Arte Povera

Week 15 – May 5 – Land Art and Earthworks

Research Papers due (May 5): 30%
Course Policies:

Submission of Work: Only typed hard copies of written assignments will be accepted. Hand-written documents, e-mail submissions, and files saved to disks will not be accepted. Students with special needs should consult the professor before the assignment due dates. Late assignments will be penalized except in the case of documented medical or other emergency. Penalties are as follows: 2% per day for the first five days, 5% per day thereafter. After ten days, late assignments will not be accepted.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to attend all class sessions and be prepared for and participate in all lectures, discussions and/or critiques. If a student misses 15% of their classes, without written corroborating for health or bereavement, they can be debarred from participation in course assignments. If a student is consistently absent from a 3-hour class for one hour, they will exceed the 15% cut off.

Plagiarism: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to a commercial plagiarism detection software. In accordance with university policy, ‘University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work).’ –Undergraduate Catalogue. The punishment for academic dishonesty can range from a written reprimand to the assigning of an F for the work in question or the class in its entirety. In addition, severe punishment can result in the dismissal of the student from the program or the university.

*Notice to Students with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in CCH (Corpus Christi Hall) 116, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING: The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

***GRADE APPEALS PROCESS: Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.
Learning Outcomes:

1. Re: Depth and Breadth of Knowledge
   - Students will have a thorough knowledge of the key critical and theoretical frameworks that pertain to the period being studied and will be able to engage with/analyze works of art from that period according to those frameworks.

2. Re: Knowledge of Methodologies
   - Students will acquire the discursive/theoretical vocabularies that are utilized in debates within the field, and will demonstrate their knowledge of the field through the deployment of the vocabulary orally and in writing.

3. Re: Application of Knowledge
   - Students will utilize their knowledge of appropriate methods, the vocabularies pertinent to the field, and their ability to make appropriate judgements, in order to develop a sound argument regarding a particular historical development, and will be able to defend their argument according to knowledge of scholarly works.

4. Re: Communication Skills
   - Students will be able to communicate orally and in writing with regard to their art history research, and will be able to utilize different genres of writing for different purposes (i.e., to write an academic paper or deliver a presentation).